

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Agriculture
Acting Minister for Local Government
Acting Minister for Suburban Development



Wednesday, 22 September 2021

SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH IN OUR FARMING COMMUNITIES

The Victorian Government is supporting the mental health of farmers across the state, rolling out projects to build resilience in more than 25 local government areas.

Programs will be run from the Bass Coast to Buloke, from the Gippsland Lakes to the Grampians – and Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas was at Elmhurst Bush Nursing Centre in western Victoria today to see the benefits of the initiative.

The *Resilient Farming Communities Project* is a two-year joint Agriculture Victoria and Department of Health initiative to support farmers, farming families and communities to better manage stress and improve their health.

Eleven councils, Primary Care Partnerships (PCPs) and private organisations will share in \$2.9 million to deliver programs that will increase awareness of mental health treatment options and care and support services, and enhance social connectedness through community events and training.

Initiatives include outreach services, on-farm health workshops, wellbeing plans for rural communities, the delivery of resilience programs in secondary schools, and mental health first aid training.

The Grampians Pyrenees PCP has received funding for The Resourceful Farmers' Project, which is being delivered in partnership with local community organisations including Elmhurst Bush Nursing Centre to build resilience through mental health training, pop-up clinics and events which foster social connections.

Grant recipients are working closely with their communities to co-develop programs that will cater to the needs of farmers.

The *Resilient Farming Communities Project* is part of the \$20 million *Smarter Safer Farms* program, ensuring Victorian agriculture is safer, more efficient and resilient.

The Victorian Government is building the agriculture sector's reputation for workplace excellence through improved health, safety and wellbeing initiatives. For more information visit: agriculture.vic.gov.au.

Quote attributable to Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas

"Our farmers have faced many challenges over the years, including drought, bushfires and now the pandemic, which all take their toll on resilience. This project ensures farmers and their communities are supported to focus on their mental health."

Quote attributable to Minister for Mental Health James Merlino

"Providing early-intervention mental health support can be genuinely life-changing – especially for rural communities. We're proud to support these locally-developed initiatives to deliver the services these communities know they need most."

Quote attributable to Member for Western Victoria Jaala Pulford

"Resilience and strong social connections are critical to good mental health and wellbeing – and nowhere is that more important than in rural and regional communities."

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Full list of *Resilient Farming Communities Project* grant recipients and associated projects:

- Bass Coast Council – Strengthening Resilience in Bass Coast’s Farming Communities
- Buloke Shire Council – Building a Better Buloke – Resilience
- Gippsland Lakes Complete Health – Connect Well East Gippsland and Wellington Farmer Resilience
- Gateway Health – Building Ovens Murray Agricultural Sector Resilience
- Gannawarra Shire Council – Resilient Gannawarra
- Grampians Pyrenees PCP – The Resourceful Farmers’ Project
- NCN Health – Farm Community Connect
- Resilience Builders – Tools for Tough Times (resilience program in schools)
- Southwest PCP – Reaching Out to Farming Families
- Western District Health Service (Southern Grampians PCP) – Building Community Resilience Leadership and Capability
- Wimmera PCP – Farming and Rural Resilience Project.